

## **Appendix K**

### **Sample Introductory Language for Final Report**



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The language below is an example of language that the Regional Offices may adapt for their use in the introduction section of the final child and family services reviews reports to States. Since the background information to describe the reviews will be the same across States, the Regional Offices will only need to add information that is State specific.

### **Introduction**

Pursuant to section 1123A of the act and 45 CFR 1355.31 through 1355.37, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is charged with the review of State child and family services programs. The purpose of the reviews is to determine the States' substantial conformity with State plan requirements and other program requirements under titles IV-B and IV-E of the act.

The reviews cover the range of child and family services programs funded through titles IV-B and IV-E, including child protective services, foster care, adoption, independent living, and family support and preservation services. The review process is twofold. The first phase consists of a statewide assessment completed by the State and submitted to the ACF within the 6-month period preceding the onsite review. The statewide assessment includes data profiles on children in foster care and children served through the child protective service system that the State uses to evaluate its effectiveness in those areas. The second phase of the process is an onsite review that includes intensive reviews of a sample of cases and interviews with State and local stakeholders in the provider and service delivery community. Information from both phases of the process is used to determine the States' substantial conformity with the requirements under review.

The review process evaluates seven specific outcomes of services delivered to children and families, in the areas of safety, permanency, and child and family well-being. The outcomes are:

- Safety: (1) Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect and (2) children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.
- Permanency: (1) Children have permanency and stability in their living situations and (2) the continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.
- Child and Family Well-Being: (1) Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs, (2) children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs, and (3) children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

Information from the statewide assessment and the onsite review of cases provides the basis for evaluating the achievement of the outcomes in the reviews.

In addition to reviewing for case outcomes, the review process also examines seven systemic factors that affect the States' capacity to deliver services in a manner that promotes positive outcomes for children and families. The systemic factors reviewed are (1) statewide information system, (2) case review system, (3) quality assurance, (4) training, (5) service array, (6) agency responsiveness to the community, and (7) foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention. Information from the statewide assessment and the onsite stakeholder interviews provides the basis for evaluating the systemic factors in the reviews.

In reviewing for outcomes and systemic factors, the review process is designed to identify both the strengths and areas needing improvement in the States' programs. For those areas in which the State is determined not to be operating in substantial conformity with requirements under review, the State has the opportunity to implement a program improvement plan designed to correct the area of nonconformity. Although the State is advised of applicable penalties associated with the degree of nonconformity, the penalties are not assessed until the State has had an opportunity to correct the area of nonconformity through the program improvement plan.

The review team that evaluates the States' performance consists of State and Federal staff, peer reviewers selected from a national pool of qualified reviewers, and State representatives who are not staff of the State or local agency being reviewed. In (NAME OF STATE), the review team members were: (LIST THE TEAM MEMBERS AND THEIR AFFILIATIONS)

The period of time covered in the child and family services review in (NAME OF STATE) was Federal fiscal year (YEAR AND DATES). The review process consisted of the following activities:

- The State completed the statewide assessment during the period of (DATES), in consultation with the ACF Regional Office.
- The State members of the review team and the ACF Regional Office selected three locations in the State for the onsite review activities: (LIST THE THREE SITES). The onsite review took place on (DATES OF ONSITE REVIEW).
- The joint State and Federal review team, consisting of (NUMBER) persons, was divided into three local teams for each of the three locations. The entire team examined (NUMBER) cases of children and families served by the agency, including interviews with the children, parents, foster parents, caseworkers, and service providers in each case. The team also conducted interviews with State and local stakeholders on the systemic factors under review in each location and for the State as a whole.
- The results of the statewide assessment, the onsite case reviews, and the stakeholder interviews were compiled by the review team into this report and used to make a determination about the State's substantial conformity with regard to each of the seven outcomes and each of the seven systemic factors.

The following report is a summary of the information obtained during the review pertaining to each outcome and systemic factor, and the performance indicators used to evaluate them.  
(INSERT FOR STATES DETERMINED NOT TO BE IN SUBSTANTIAL CONFORMITY):  
The ACF Regional Office will be working with the (NAME OF STATE AGENCY) to develop a program improvement plan that addresses those areas noted in the report that are not in substantial conformity.